

VZCZCXRO5928  
PP RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH RUEHTRO  
DE RUEHGO #0392/01 1370741  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 160741Z MAY 08  
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7620  
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE  
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1204  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4748  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 8292  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5854  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3725  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1630  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 RANGOON 000392

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR USAID/OFDA, EAP/MLS, S/ES-O-CMS, DS/CC AND  
DS/IP/EAP; PACOM FOR LTC JAMIE MCADEN; BANGKOK FOR RSO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [E](#)[A](#)[I](#)[D](#) [B](#)[M](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: CYCLONE NARGIS SITREP NO. 10

REF: A. RANGOON 387

[1](#)B. RANGOON 376 AND PREVIOUS

SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (SBU) EMBASSY OPERATIONS: Embassy Rangoon operated on city power and had full diesel fuel tanks. Consular received no new Amcit welfare and whereabouts inquiries and all previous inquiries have been resolved. No criminal incidents involving American staff were reported.

[1](#)2. (SBU) U.S. RELIEF FLIGHTS: We have received flight clearances for four C-130 relief flights to arrive at Rangoon International Airport on May 16, including two consigned to NGOs. We have submitted flight requests for four more flights for May 17, including two consigned to NGOs. The Ministry of Defense told DAO that they would permit Thailand-based U.S. helicopters to conduct relief flights into Rangoon.

[1](#)3. (SBU) SITUATION ON THE GROUND: The UN estimated that as of May 16, it has reached approximately 500,000 beneficiaries out of an estimated 1.5-2.5 million victims. UN aid flights continued to arrive smoothly, with four more expected on May [1](#)16. UN Humanitarian Coordinator John Holmes received a Burmese visa and will arrive on May 18. The WHO told us cases of cholera had been confirmed in Rangoon and Irrawaddy division, but said the incidents of infection were not significantly greater than for this same time every year. Embassy contacts who recently returned from Labutta township in the delta described the situation as dire. The GOB's official newspaper continued to publish detailed accounts of the receipt and distribution of relief supplies, and carried a front page article threatening prosecution for anyone found embezzling diverting relief aid.

EMBASSY OPERATIONS  
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[1](#)4. (SBU) STAFFING AND OPERATIONS: Embassy Rangoon operated on its normal 0800-1630 schedule subject to a liberal leave policy. Other than those on regularly scheduled leave, a full complement of local employees reported for work.

¶5. (SBU) CONSULAR: Amcit, reported in Rangoon 376 as being diagnosed with gastroentitis and dehydration at the Mawlamyine hospital, informed consular he will not depart Burma as originally planned on May 17. Instead, he intends to stay in Mawlamyine to regain strength over the weekend and to depart for his monastery in Germany on May 20. Consular continues to assist with his travel arrangements and contact with friends and family.

¶6. (SBU) AUTHORIZED DEPARTURE: All EFMs who asked to depart are in Bangkok and plan to remain there until at least May ¶25. The EAC will meet again before that to make a recommendation to M either to end post's authorized departure or continue it until 30 days have elapsed from authorization.

¶7. (SBU) FUEL AND POWER: The Embassy operated on city power and had full diesel storage tanks. We received a high octane delivery today, May 16.

¶8. (SBU) WATER: The Embassy continued to have adequate water supplies and purification capacity on hand.

¶9. (SBU) SECURITY: No criminal incidents involving American staff were reported.

#### U.S. RELIEF FLIGHTS

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¶10. (SBU) We have received flight clearances for four C-130 relief flights to arrive at Rangoon International Airport on May 16, including two consigned to NGOs. We have submitted

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flight requests for four more flights for May 17, including two consigned to NGOs.

¶11. (SBU) The Ministry of Defense told DAO that they would permit Thailand-based U.S. helicopters to conduct relief flights into Rangoon.

#### SITUATION ON THE GROUND

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¶12. (SBU) CONDITIONS, CASUALTIES AND DAMAGE: The WHO told us cases of cholera had been confirmed in Rangoon and Irrawaddy division, but said the incidents of infection were not significantly greater than this time every year. WHO officials noted that because of the amount of time it takes to get test results, the Ministry of Health normally treats all severe diarrhea as cholera, and continues to do so. According to WHO statistics, cholera is endemic in Burma, with more than 1,000 cases occurring annually.

¶13. (SBU) An expatriate journalist who recently returned from Labutta township in the delta told us that, as of May 14, at least one established INGO was able to provide medical aid in the area. He said the INGO had numerous local staff in the area along with at least three western aid workers who had entered the country on business visas after the cyclone. Conditions on the ground were dire, he reported, with virtually all structures destroyed by the cyclone, and thousands of residents and IDPs seeking shelter in the few local monasteries and schools that remained. Another Embassy contact who returned from Labutta on May 15 told us many cyclone victims had been moved from Labutta to Myaung Mya, where the GOB had established more relief camps. He observed international relief supplies being delivered to and distributed from a soccer field in town. Nonetheless, our contact described the GOB's relief efforts in Myaung Mya as inefficient and in need of improvement.

¶14. (SBU) RECOVERY AND RELIEF: The UN estimated that as of May 16, it has reached approximately 500,000 beneficiaries out of an estimated 1.5-2.5 million victims. The WFP has distributed 1,200 metric tons of rice throughout the affected

areas. UN aid flights continued to arrive smoothly, with four more expected on May 16. UN officials in Rangoon reported that some UN teams of local staff en route to the affected areas had been stopped at checkpoints and told to obtain travel permits. However the MFA assured the UN that there is no such policy for UN staff and said this would be clarified at the GOB's next disaster coordination meeting with the military. UN Humanitarian Coordinator John Holmes received a Burmese visa and will arrive on May 18. He hopes to visit relief operations in the field and work with the country team to improve the UN's relief efforts.

¶15. (SBU) The five-person ASEAN disaster assessment team has not received travel permission to visit the affected areas. The team's leader will depart Burma on Sunday in order to brief the ASEAN ministerial meeting scheduled for May 19.

¶16. (SBU) The GOB's New Light of Myanmar newspaper continued to publish detailed accounts of the receipt and distribution of relief supplies, including a partial list of relief supplies donated by Asian countries since May 6. In particular, it stated that so far the Burma Air Force has transported 330 tons of relief supplies, 17 percent of the total 1,816 tons of international supplies the Social Welfare Ministry said the GOB has delivered so far (reftel A). The paper also carried a front page article threatening prosecution for anyone found embezzling relief aid.

¶17. (SBU) A major retail supermarket chain in Rangoon, City Mart, sent an open letter to an exile media website contesting recent reports that the chain had sold relief supplies at its stores. The letter pointed out that City Mart regularly purchased goods from Thai suppliers and speculated that reporters may have mistaken these commercial

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goods for relief supplies. Other commercial contacts have told us that as normal supply lines were disrupted, new brands began to appear in local markets which many consumers may have confused for relief supplies. So far, none of our local staff or aid contacts have found any evidence of relief supplies being sold in commercial markets in Rangoon or Irrawaddy division. We will continue to actively monitor this situation.

¶18. (SBU) FUEL: Fuel prices in Rangoon remained stable.

¶19. (SBU) FOOD AND WATER: Food in Rangoon was still expensive, especially meat and rice. Shortages in the delta continued.

¶20. (SBU) ELECTRICITY: The GOB continued to restore power to parts of Rangoon, focusing on the eastern, western, and northern parts of the city. According to Embassy contacts, the GOB has brought in over 4,000 technicians from around the country to help rebuild power lines. So far, power has been restored to 40 percent of townships in Eastern Rangoon, 65 percent of townships in Western Rangoon, 49 percent of townships in Northern Rangoon, and 13 percent of townships in Southern Rangoon. However, our sources expect it may take between three and six months before all of Rangoon has power restored.

¶21. (SBU) LAW AND ORDER: We received no reports of widespread looting or public disturbances in or around Rangoon.

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